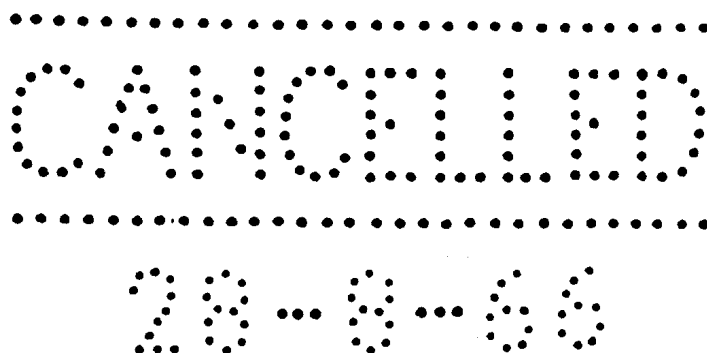


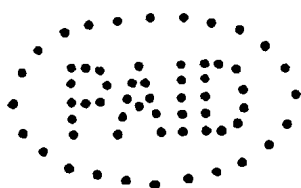
I thought it might be worthwhile summarising what is known about perfin machinery, particularly to help the newer members. Members may be able to add to this information and I would be pleased to receive any additional information. Thanks to John Nelson for his comments.

Sloper's first patent was in 1858 for cancelling cheques and comprised either a roller with projecting pins or a punch. The roller idea was stillborn and for the first ten years of the fourteen year patent, Sloper seems to have just sold machines to cancel cheques.

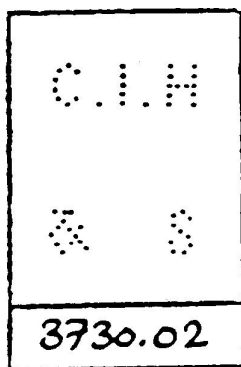


This all changed when Sloper and his client, Copestake Moore S Co. came up with the idea of perforating stamps to prevent them being stolen and the Post Office agreed. Sloper soon saw that he could get more work by doing the perforating himself rather than supplying machines to clients and could gain from the discount on bulk supplies of stamps.

The cheque machines were occasionally used on stamps, they are then called "carpet dies", there was no attempt to fit the letters on each stamp. The perfin U1440 (UNIN CORR COLL) is an example, but these are in the minority. If a client wanted his own machine, often the same casting was used as for a small cheque machine that, for instance, could perforate "PAID".



However the bulk of perfins were done by Sloper on machines in which he could quickly change the dies for different clients and when they became power driven are probably the machines they use to this day. Big clients had multiple dies capable of perforating 12 stamps across the sheet at a time, small clients just single dies.



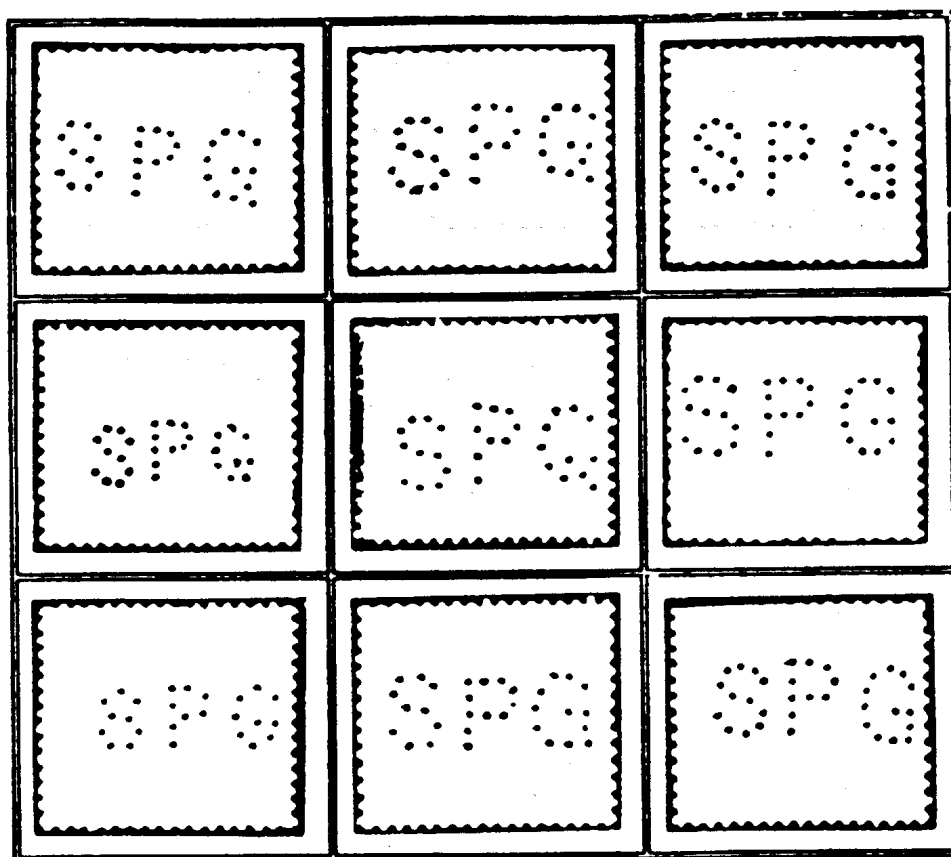
Typical small letter perfin
die used 1868-75 period.
(See reference to this die
in "Seen In Auction"
on a QV £1 stamp.)

In 1872 Sloper's patent expired and the field was open to competition. They tried unsuccessfully to patent minor improvements they had made over the years to their machines in a last attempt to fight off the competition.

In 1873 Sloper's son produced a further machine with a series of dies on a horizontal wheel, a logical progression, for the larger user who wanted different dies but wanted to perforate the stamps themselves (like Gregory Rowcliffe & Co. who used GR/&Co and R/&Co.)

This leaves one other type of machine, which we think existed at the time. This has become apparent from new research for the New Illustrated Catalogue. Perhaps this was produced by Braham as I think he advertised a dieless machine which I take to mean a machine without a permanent die with letters in the form of the clients initials. It seems that this used single letter dies slotted together to form the letters much as type is clamped together in printing. The letters could be slotted together in any combination, usually of three letters and horizontal on the stamp. The letters are usually large and crude; why we do not know. It seems strange that when this method is possibly the most complex, so little care was taken over the letter dies themselves. By the number of different letters found it appears these dies were multiple and it would be interesting to see any evidence of this in strips or blocks of stamps.

Probably the most well known of these “clamped” dies is that
Of THE SOCIETY FOR THE PROPOGATION OF THE GOSPEL.



One further machine should be mentioned. In 1868 Sloper's took out a provisional patent for a machine to perforate railway tickets with the date; this was firmed up the following year. I believe the Perfin Society has one of these; the die being attached to a kind of pendulum which gave the momentum to pierce the heavy card of the railway tickets but it was not used on stamps.

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